



neighborhood news

The Latest News and Information from Your Bluemont Civic Association

September 2013

bluemontcivic.org

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Mark Your Calendars

BCA Meetings (Executive & General)	9/26
7:30 pm, ATS	
Columbus Day Bell Ringing	10/14
Noon, Constitution Garden Park	
BCA Meetings (Executive & General)	10/23
7:30 pm, ATS (tentative)	
Free Tree Distribution	10/26
(see details on p. 9)	
Sidewalk Safety Task Force	11/16
8 am, Two Chefs	
BCA Meetings (Executive & General)	11/20
7:30 pm, ATS (tentative)	



New bocce courts at Glebe & Randolph Park

From the BCA President

Working together, Bluemont neighbors have accomplished much to improve our community over the past year. Perhaps most significantly, Bluemont has a newly updated Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Plan. This plan, developed through grassroots engagement, was voted on and adopted by all Bluemont residents, and it reflects the desires of the community as a whole. The county's Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) and BCA members use the plan to select improvement projects for funding. The Bluemont neighborhood's priority project to improve Wilson Boulevard sidewalks west of George Mason Drive is now in the queue for NCAC funding.

The BCA's efforts to obtain a bocce court reached a milestone in March, when staff in the county's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) selected a site for a future court in Fields Park. The location meets park management's requirements for visibility, limited impact to surrounding trees, and proximity to adjoining neighbors. Fields Park also has been home to other successful programmed sports activities for well over

(cont'd on p. 2)

**Next Meeting:
Thursday,
September 26
Details on p. 3.**

From the BCA President (cont'd)

5 years and offers seasonally available portable restroom facilities. The county has no plans to build a court in Fields Park at this time. However, just outside our civic association's borders are two brand new, regulation-size bocce courts now open for play in the park adjacent to Ballston Common Mall at the corner of N. Glebe Road and N. Randolph Street. Beyond site selection for the future community bocce court, the BCA has worked closely with the DPR to facilitate improvements to our parks and trails—from the removal of invasive plants to the planting of native trees and shrubs to the planning for infrastructure renewal and replacement.

On April 3, the Bluemont Civic Association hosted representatives of Safeway Inc., at which time they presented their proposal to redevelop their property at 5101 Wilson Boulevard to the community at large. The well-attended forum included a healthy exchange of views in the form of questions and comments from the community, with Safeway and their selected developer, Mark Silverwood, providing responses. Following this forum, BCA members discussed and debated the pros and cons of Safeway's proposal and formulated an official BCA position, which was sent to Safeway Inc. and to the Arlington County Board. (See related article on p. 4.)

In May, BCA members, by the requisite two-thirds majority, voted to amend the Association's bylaws. The recent changes impose term limits on certain officers and add constraints to assure that the president correctly represents Association views in his/her contacts with private property owners, developers, retail establishments, and other private entities. Members also adopted standing rules to regulate the conduct of elections.

On behalf of all BCA members, I would like to thank all those who have participated in these achievements by attending meetings, serving as Association officers or members of special committees, acting as a BCA liaison or representative, editing and distributing the newsletter, managing the website and listserv, engaging neighbors, exchanging views, discussing, debating, and voting. Together we have done good work to preserve and improve our community. That work goes on, as we continue to participate in shaping redevelopment within and adjacent to our boundaries. Your ideas and your talent are always welcome.

George

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Use the email addresses listed below to reach specific individuals electronically.

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BCA Meetings at a Glance

Next Meeting: Thursday, September 26

Topic: *Wilson Boulevard Sidewalk Safety Project*

Join us at Arlington Traditional School (ATS) on September 26, 7 pm, for the BCA Executive Board meeting (all members are welcome). The general membership meeting begins at 7:30 pm. Dennis Leach, from the Department of Environmental Services, and other county staff members in the transportation division will be on hand to update us on county data collection, funding, and other considerations regarding the BCA's request to improve pedestrian safety along Wilson Boulevard. (See related article on p. 7.)

Summertime Executive Board Meeting Recap

Although the BCA does not hold general membership meetings during the vacation season in July and August, the Executive Board and various committees continue to meet and work on behalf of the membership. Below are a few highlights:

July 10—The board met with Safeway representatives to discuss next steps (see the article on p. 4 for more details). No votes were held.

July 24—The board voted to invite members attending the 9/26 meeting to volunteer for a special committee that would track Marymount's redevelopment proposal and help draft the BCA's position on the site plan. The 1st VP reported on his discussion with a professional construction estimator. The estimator said that costs for above-ground structured parking were typically 30% to 50% less than the costs for an underground parking garage. The president reported on issues related to the PayPal online dues payment system. The board voted to keep newsletter advertising rates constant and authorized a redesign of the ad rate sheet. It also voted to approve a budget for design of the Sept.–Dec. newsletters.

August 28—Outstanding traffic-calming/pedestrian safety measures near the Peck-Staples site were discussed with county staff member Ritch Viola. Rovder appointed Ed Fendley as the NCAC alternate representative. The board approved \$50 to purchase a microphone/amplifier system to use at meetings.

For more details, visit <http://www.bluemontcivic.org/index.php/content/newsletters> to review the complete Executive Board meeting minutes.

Annual Meeting Election Results

Please welcome our new Executive Board members who were elected at the June 26 Annual Meeting:

President George Rovder; 1st Vice-President (VP) Mark Haynes; 2nd VP Larry Smith; Treasurer Nancy O'Doherty; Secretary Laura Kirkconnell; Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee Representative Chris Healey; and Civic Federation delegates Bob Atkins, David Hughes, Terry Serie, and Suzanne Sundburg and alternates Patrick Bryan, Craig Deering, Dean Foster, and James McMullin.

We offer a special word of thanks to outgoing 2nd VP Dan Laredo, Civic Federation delegate Sandy Munnell and alternate Ed Fendley for their service to the BCA.

Tentative 2013–14 Meeting Dates

2013: September 26 (confirmed), October 23, November 20, December 18

2014: January 22, February 26, March 26, April 23, May 28, June 25

Unless otherwise noted, all BCA meetings will be held at ATS in the regular 7/7:30 pm time slot. Oct.–June meeting dates are subject to ATS confirmation. Please check www.bluemontcivic.org for updates on meeting dates/times/places.

Independent Groups Seek To Shape Safeway Redevelopment



Preliminary architect's rendering of proposed Safeway

In June, *Neighborhood News* reported that developer Mark Silverwood had withdrawn from the Safeway redevelopment project he proposed in late March. (Briefly, the Silverwood-Safeway proposal called for an upzoning of the property to allow a building height of up to 65 feet, with 160 1- and 2-bedroom apartments above the store and 400 underground parking spaces.)

When contacted by the BCA, Silverwood characterized his decision to withdraw as “complex” and referred all questions to Safeway. On June 27, the BCA board sent a letter to Safeway officials repeating the BCA’s strong support for the redevelopment of Bluemont’s Safeway, and the board expressed its desire to work closely with Safeway and the community. To that end, the board set up a face-to-face meeting with Safeway on July 10. Safeway officials were reticent in their comments, saying only that Safeway was “weighing its options” with respect to the redevelopment. Although rumors about Safeway’s working with another developer continue to swirl, Safeway has neither confirmed nor denied that it has selected a new partner.

BCA’s Official Position

In April, BCA members considered three options before selecting a position on the Silverwood-Safeway proposal. Option A supported the existing C-1 zoning that limits building height to 35 feet (plus a 23-foot penthouse). Option B gave conditional approval for a building height of up to 45 feet. And Option C supported Silverwood’s proposal.

Of the 173 votes cast by members in April, 56.6% (98) voted for Option A, 24.9% (43) for Option B, and 18.5% (32) for Option C. In

a subsequent voice vote, Option A then received overwhelming approval as the BCA’s official position on the Silverwood proposal. The distribution of votes in April closely tracked the results of a neighborhood-wide NC survey conducted back in 2010, which probed members’ comfort level regarding various height limits.

“Bluemont Forward”

Following the April vote, a new group of residents—not affiliated with the Bluemont Civic Association—formed to advocate for improvement of the neighborhood’s commercial area along Wilson Boulevard west of George Mason Drive. The group, which calls itself Bluemont Forward, believes that a moderately scaled, mixed-use, redeveloped Safeway site offering public amenities and anchoring a walkable neighborhood village center should be allowed a level of density beyond what the current C-1 zoning permits. At the same time, Bluemont Forward holds that the density should be less than that of the five-and-six-story building that Silverwood and Safeway proposed in April. For further details, visit www.BluemontForward.org or contact BluemontForward@gmail.com.

“35 Feet High or Less”

Bluemont Forward isn’t the only unaffiliated advocacy group that has been seeking to shape the redevelopment of Bluemont’s Safeway. For over a year, an informal group of like-minded neighbors has been circulating a petition that supports retaining the current C-1 zoning for the site. The petitioners believe that by keeping the current zoning and height

(cont’d on p.5)

Marymount Seeks Blue Goose's Redevelopment

Marymount University and the Shooshan Company are seeking approval to redevelop the property at 1000 N. Glebe Road, familiarly known as the "Blue Goose." The BCA has an opportunity to express its views on this redevelopment, situated within its boundaries. And Arlington County Board approval is required for any change to the zoning or land-use plan.

Marymount and Shooshan propose replacing the current 8-story, 70,000 sq ft academic building with two new structures: a 9-story and a 12-story building, totaling 415,000 sq ft. The shorter building would be situated near the current structure's location, and it would include rental commercial office space above the academic floors to provide income for the owner. The taller structure would face N. Glebe Road on the site of the current Marymount parking lot, and it would house rental apartments above the ground-floor retail level. These apartments are intended for the open market.



The proposed C-O-2.5 zoning would permit a six-story, 216,000 sq ft structure.

Marymount-Shooshan hope to gain County Board approval for the increased "bonus" density by obtaining LEED certification for the academic/rental office building, by including affordable housing units in the apartment building,

and by providing other, as yet undefined, "Marymount uses."

BCA members who are interested in participating in this process are encouraged to volunteer for a Marymount Site Plan Task Force. Volunteers would attend site plan review meetings, report back to the membership, and recommend possible positions for the Association to adopt. If you are interested in serving, please contact George at president@bluemontcivic.org.

For more details about Marymount's redevelopment proposal, visit http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CPHD/planning/applications/site_plans/page89730.aspx.

Safeway Redevelopment (cont'd)

limits, the redevelopment's adverse impacts on the neighborhood and public schools will be minimized, and the neighborhood's character of predominantly single-family homes and other low-density housing will be preserved. For further details, visit www.ipetitions.com/petition/keep-safeway-site-at-35-feet-high-or-less/.

What's Next?

Members of the BCA Executive Board and the BCA's Safeway Task Force (STF) have continued to take proactive steps to keep open the lines of communication with Safeway, county government, Bluemont Forward, and the community at large.

In short, our work related to Safeway's redevelopment is still ongoing. Stay tuned for further updates.

To review information related to Safeway, visit the BCA website at www.BluemontCivic.org and the Safeway Task Force's webpage at <http://safewaytaskforce.wordpress.com>.

You also may join the STF's Google announcement list or ask questions by contacting STF co-chairs Mark Haynes at FirstVP@BluemontCivic.org or David Van Wagner at dpvanwagner@mindspring.com.

Oct. 14 Bell Ringing



Stop by Constitution Garden Park (corner of Geo. Mason & Wilson) at noon on Columbus Day to hear the Bicentennial Bell ring.

APAH Unveils The Springs

On July 29, the county's Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) held its first meeting for The Springs (SP#430). Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH) proposes to demolish the 27-unit Carlin Springs Apartments located at 4318 N. Carlin Springs Road. (Although this building lies just inside the Buckingham Community Civic Association's borders, neighboring civic associations are also permitted to participate in the SPRC process.)

In its place, APAH proposes to build a 104-unit apartment building with a maximum height of 72 feet and 111 parking spaces. Approximately 5,600 sq ft of the ground-floor space will serve as APAH's new headquarters. Of the 104 units, 96 are planned to be affordable for households earning less than 60% of area median income.

The chief criticism of the applicant's plan concerned the building's height, which some thought violated the spirit of the five-story height limit that the county set as part of the long-range plan for this block.

Other concerns included the building's inadequate setbacks and the extent of impermeable surface area. The new 72-foot building will sit next to a one-story, single-family home. All the other development along N. Thomas Street comprises new and existing low-density housing of three stories or less with substantial setbacks from the curb.

Several attendees questioned whether the proposed R-C upzoning of the site was truly necessary or whether a lower zoning category with added bonus density might be sufficient to meet APAH's goals.

For more details, visit http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CPHD/planning/applications/site_plans/page89967.aspx.



Bylaws Review Committee Update

In May, the membership voted to make some initial amendments to update the association's bylaws (see the president's message on p. 1). Over the summer, the committee met on July 14 and August 11 (and most recently on September 8) to evaluate and discuss additional changes.

Below are some of changes that the committee is considering:

- Revising and simplifying the dues structure in consultation with the treasurer
- Establishing the NCAC alternate as an elected position
- Revising the language for the Nominating Committee and nominations process
- Adding a section on good governance
- Adding a sunset provision for committees
- Closing a membership-requirement loophole for the Executive Board
- Correcting outdated, inadvertently deleted, inconsistent, or incorrect wording in addition to misspellings

The committee will present its next set of recommended changes to the membership at the September 26 general membership meeting for review and discussion.

Where Can You Find BCA's Bylaws?

Visit www.bluemontcivic.org and click on the "About BCA" button in the upper right-hand corner of the home page.

Sidewalk Safety Task Force Update

Wilson Sidewalk & Reconfiguration Plans

In cooperation with Arlington County officials and neighborhood residents, the BCA is working to improve pedestrian safety along Wilson Boulevard and at other locations in the neighborhood.

Wilson Boulevard sidewalk improvements are the neighborhood's priority project for the purposes of the county's Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Program.

This program could provide initial funding for the project within the next year. The BCA Sidewalk Safety Task Force is also communicating with county officials about additional potential funding sources.

In October 2012, the BCA decided to request that the county reconfigure Wilson Boulevard west of George Mason Drive (GMD) with the objective of improving sidewalks so that they meet county and Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. The reconfiguration would convert the current four travel lanes into one lane in each direction, a new two-way center turn lane, new bicycle lanes, periodic medians, additional turn lanes at intersections, and new planting-utility strips so as to buffer and widen sidewalks and remove obstructions. According to county traffic engineers and other experts, such a configuration could improve safety for all types of roadway users without increasing motor vehicle travel times along Wilson.

The BCA has called for phased implementation of the safety improvements, with an initial phase of roadway restriping and a subsequent phase involving curb and sidewalk reconstruction. The BCA has traffic and crash data for the roadway.

In addition, the Sidewalk Safety Task Force is working to identify and pursue options to improve Wilson's sidewalks east of George Mason Drive. Experts have advised that the types of measures applied east of GMD may need to be different than those west of GMD in light of differing traffic volumes and trends.



Peck-Staples Area Traffic-Calming Moves Ahead

Neighborhood residents, the BCA, and county officials are also working to improve pedestrian safety and calm traffic in the area west of Glebe Road near the former Peck-Staples site and at the Bluemont Junction Trail's Emerson Street crossing.

Bluemont residents interested in the Wilson Boulevard safety improvements or other pedestrian safety projects are invited to join in bimonthly meetings of the Sidewalk Safety Task Force or contact co-chairs Chris Healey (cphealey@me.com) and Ed Fendley (edfendley@gmail.com).

The next scheduled meetings are Saturday, September 21, and Saturday, November 16, 8 am, at Two Chefs restaurant.



New Webmaster Volunteers!

Please welcome Jonn Lau, our new Webmaster. Jonn has agreed to help us out as we transition from the existing site to a new and updated platform, which is a lot of work. We also thank former Webmaster Laura Brothers, who soldiered on for nearly a year despite some significant challenges.

Noise Ordinance and the Greene Turtle

The Arlington County Civic Federation's Planning & Zoning Committee has been working with county staff for over a year to revise the county's noise ordinance. Complaints of excessive noise are common here in Bluemont, which makes this ordinance an important one for the local community.

Several years ago, after a Virginia Supreme Court ruling gutted the long-standing criteria used to enforce noise ordinances statewide, nearly every county and city in the Commonwealth has been forced to revise its ordinance.

Structural limitations make regulating excessive noise in Arlington County difficult. For example, code enforcement officers operate Mon.–Fri., 9 am–5pm. The police must handle noise disturbances occurring at all other times. Police officers, too, face constraints—for example, there is no enforceable county standard for noise made by people. And police rely on the county to craft robust and enforceable site plan conditions and use permits so that zoning and code enforcement staff can enforce noise restrictions where restaurants and bars are concerned.

Unfortunately, site plan conditions are subject to change, and use permits are not always ironclad. Patrons and outdoor entertainment at establishments like Union Jack's (now closed) have created significant disruption to nearby Bluemont neighbors late at night.

On August 1, staff asked the BCA to comment on the renewal of the Greene Turtle's (a sports bar) outdoor entertainment use permit. The BCA always tries to be supportive of local businesses, but at the same time it wants those businesses to be good neighbors.

When the Greene Turtle applied for this permit in 2012, the BCA worked with the bar's manager and county staff. The BCA Executive Board sent a letter that included several conditions, asking staff to add them to the permit language. Unfortunately, not all of those conditions were incorporated. For example, the outdoor seating was placed on 9th Street North (rather than along N. Glebe Road) and is within 75 feet of neighborhood residences.

Whereas few problems have been reported thus far, a change in the Turtle's management or an aggressive liquor promotion (as various establishments compete for business) is all it would take for a serious noise problem to develop. The current permit conditions are unlikely to be sufficient to control late-night noise. And county staff is asking for a 3-year permit review period rather than the

current 1-year review period—making it harder for the neighborhood to get relief if a problem occurs.

As this renewal was scheduled for county action prior to the September 26 BCA general membership meeting, the Executive Board voted to approve sending a letter to the county, which again recommends conditions for minimizing noise-related conflict. The letter also strongly urges the county to keep the 1-year review period.

Coming Soon: A New Online Dues Payment Option

It's been just two years since the BCA began accepting online payment for dues. During that time, the options for online payment processing have expanded enormously. To take advantage of these new services and features, the BCA has shut down its existing PayPal processing account. Existing memberships already processed through PayPal will not be affected, and those members will receive notice when it is time to renew.

In the coming months, the BCA will introduce a new online payment option that will offer the same security and convenience to pay membership dues as before, but it will provide a clearer explanation of the charge on your credit card statement, reduce the portion of your dues that are paid as credit card processing fees, and improve reporting.

In the meantime, we'll still be accepting dues the old-fashioned way—by cash or check, by mail or in person. Please see the back page of this newsletter for details on how you may join or renew your BCA membership.

From the Parks & Rec Liaison

Next summer, look for blooming delights along the W&OD trail in Bon Air Park. In August, volunteers and county staff removed the strangling vines along the hillside under the power lines and uncovered “treasure banks” of native flowers such as black-eyed Susans, mayapples, flameleaf sumac, jewelweed, and more that feed pollinators and butterflies. The project’s goal is to showcase native plants appropriate for growing under power lines, smaller trees near power lines, and canopy trees suitable near the stream bank. It’s a 2-year work in progress, and we always need volunteers. Contact Nora at norapalm@verizon.net or 703-527-2349 to help.

Free 3 Feet High Trees!

The Annual Tree Education and Distribution will be held on Saturday, October 26, at the county nursery near Four Mile Run and



Plant your tree and watch it grow!

S. George Mason Drives. As of press time the selection of tree species has not been made, so check www.TreeStewards.org in September for information on the available species, how to choose the best species for your yard, and how to reserve your selection. TreeSteward volunteers are available to assist.

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**Call Maryen or Raul at
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Washington-Lee Capacity Problems Discussed

On August 6, the Washington-Lee (W-L) High School PTA met with School Board Chair Abby Raphael to discuss W-L capacity issues. (W-L was overenrolled as soon as the new building opened its doors, and the problem is growing.)

According to Raphael, the School Board must consider options such as revising school boundaries, extending the school day, and increasing class size. She thought it unlikely that an additional high school would be built in the county, which means enrollment increases must be absorbed by the existing high schools.

In September, the new Wakefield High School will open with 400+ empty seats, whereas W-L was forced to add more trailers over the summer to accommodate rising enrollment. If the School Board decides to revise boundaries, the process would likely be fast-tracked so that changes could take effect in the fall of 2014.

Current projections for Wakefield’s existing attendance zone indicate the new building will be over capacity within 5 years.

Therefore, the School Board must consider other options for a long-term solution:

See the W-L PTA Capacity Utilization Committee’s 4/11/2013 analysis at <http://www.apsva.us/Page/22070> for details.

School boundary changes are always controversial because many parents pay a premium to live in attendance zones for certain schools they believe are superior. According to one local realtor, the sale prices of comparable homes can vary by tens of thousands of dollars—or more—depending on the attendance zone in which a house is located.

BCA Member Benefits



- Exercise your right to vote on BCA positions and leadership
- Fully participate in monthly meetings (Sept.–June) to learn about and discuss issues
- Receive informative monthly newsletters (Sept.–June) in addition to listserv notices
- Have representation at Site Plan Review Committee and other county meetings related to development
- Participate on special committees that study issues and make recommendations to the membership
- Enjoy having a greater voice with more impact as part of a larger community group

Twice a year, hard-working BCA volunteers fan out to hand-deliver a BCA newsletter free of charge to your and your neighbors' doorsteps. You have received this newsletter compliments of the Bluemont Civic Association. To receive the monthly mailed newsletter and to participate and vote at BCA meetings, you must become a paid BCA member (if you're not one already).

Why does BCA membership matter? Because it entitles you and your family to have a say in matters facing our community. With our close proximity to Ballston, the Bluemont community is subject to redevelopment forces and other changes that will have a profound impact on life in our neighborhood and its future.

County officials and staff members consider Arlington's civic associations to be the official voice of local neighborhoods like Bluemont. And the County Board takes the BCA's official positions on redevelopment projects; traffic, zoning and land use; and other important issues into consideration when it makes decisions affecting our community.

Civic association members in good standing have the right to participate in association discussions and vote. Dues paid in September are \$20, which will keep your membership current through December 2014 and includes a subscription to the mailed newsletter.

If you want to have a say in shaping our community, please join us. And please consider lending your talent as a volunteer. We are always looking for new officers, committee chairs/members, and representatives. Immediate needs include newsletter editors, web professionals, newsletter carriers, and a special events coordinator.

The Bluemont Civic Association: Who We Are

The Bluemont Civic Association is a not-for-profit civic organization that has represented the interests of the Bluemont Neighborhood since the association was established in 1945.

The Bluemont Civic Association is the only organization working exclusively on behalf of you and all Bluemont residents. We are your friends and neighbors, striving to make our streets safe for our children and other pedestrians, enhance our parks and preserve our environment, maintain property values, represent local interests and build a stronger sense of community.

RENEW TODAY!

Keep your membership current through December 2014.

GO PAPERLESS AND SAVE TREES

- Members may elect to receive *BCA Neighborhood News* electronically rather than by mail by simply checking this box. Be sure to provide your e-mail address! (All information is for BCA use only.)

Name _____

Address _____

E-Mail _____

- Bring this form and cash or a check for \$20 to the September 26 general membership meeting, or
- Mail the form with your check to the Bluemont Civic Association at BCA Treasurer, PO Box 5134, Arlington VA 22205.